

US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) The Office of Family Assistance (OFA)

Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Initiatives

Overview, What has Worked, and Lessons Learned

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Presentation Goals

- Provide an overview of Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Federal efforts in support of Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Initiatives
- Share Lessons Learned from Federal Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage grantee efforts Nationally

Brain Teasers

According to Pew Research, what percent of Men between the ages of 15-44 have a desire to be fathers?

87%

Brain Teasers

What percentage of US Children
lived apart from their Fathers in
1960?

11%

Brain Teasers

What percentage of US Children
lived apart from their Fathers in
2010?

27%

Benefits of Positive Father Engagement

- Improves School Readiness
- Lowers levels of disruptive behavior in boys
- Improves girls self-esteem
- Improves the cognitive development of children if the father is positively involved between birth and 24 months.
- Shared parenting and less stress on mothers.
- Provides positive male role model for boys and girls during development

Source: ACF Web Site <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/about/mission.html>

Benefits of Healthy Marriages

For Children:

- Physically Healthier
- Emotionally Healthier
- Less likely to be raised in poverty
- Less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol

For Women:

- More satisfying relationship
- Less likely to contract STD's
- Wealthier
- Decreased risk of drug and alcohol abuse

For Men:

- Live Longer
- Higher wages
- Physically Healthier
- Deeper bond/connection with children

Overview of Federal Efforts to Promote Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance

R Real Families
Real Strengths

Four Purposes of TANF

The four purposes of the TANF program as described in Section 401 of the Social Security Act and 45 CFR 260.20 of the TANF regulations are as follows:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish an annual numerical goal for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies.
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Deficit Reduction Act of 2005

- The TANF and Related Programs section of the DRA (Section 7103) authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to provide competitive funding for demonstration projects that promote healthy marriage education and responsible fatherhood activities.
- The TANF program was authorized in the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 (P.L. 109-171), which was signed by the President into law in February 2006.

Federal Grantees

- In September 2006, The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) awarded 226 nationally competitive grants under the authority of the DRA to promote healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood.
- These grants provide vital services that promote the overall well-being of children and families.

Healthy Marriage Allowable Activities

Healthy Marriage grantees were awarded funding to conduct services under one or more the following allowable activities:

- **Public advertising campaigns** on the value of healthy marriages and the skills needed to increase marital stability and the health of the marriage.
- **Education in high schools** on the value of healthy marriages, healthy relationship skills, and budgeting.
- **Marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs**, that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement, for non-married pregnant women and non-married expectant fathers.
- **Pre-marital education and marriage skills training** for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage.

Healthy Marriage Allowable Activities

- **Marriage enhancement and marriage skills training** programs for married couples.
- **Divorce reduction programs** that teach healthy relationship skills.
- **Marriage mentoring** programs which use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.
- **Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage** in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.

Responsible Fatherhood Authorized Activities

Responsible fatherhood grantees were awarded funding to conduct services in one or more of three allowable activities:

1. Provide Healthy Marriage Activities
2. Encourage Responsible Parenting
3. Foster Economic Stability

Direct Learning from the Field ...

What we Heard from the Fathers

The Joys of Fathering

- They all seemed to enjoy the wonder of birth
- Being called “Daddy” for first time
- Embraced opportunity to shape next generation
- Seeing your children’s accomplishments—such as “attaining higher educational levels than me”

Fathering Challenges

- Teaching my kids “to do differently than I did”
- The challenges of Custody and Child Support
- Working hard to break cycles of unhealthy family patterns to produce different outcomes for your children
- Parenting challenges after periods of separation
- Importance of relating to the child’s mother “for the benefit of the child(ren)”

Fathers as Providers

- Men still see this as CORE to who they as fathers
- Fatherhood/Healthy Marriage Programs that can link/connect Dads with Jobs face less recruitment challenges – it's meeting a need that men see as a CORE NEED
- Support groups – breaking down isolation, sharing challenges, fostering connections

Fathering, Healthy Marriage and Relationships

- Men value talking with other men about how to better communicate with their spouses or significant others
- Men wanted to breaking abusive cycle—just didn't know how. They saw the importance of Domestic Violence programming partners
- A “what's best for the children” mentality most often reached men when disagreements occurred with the child's mother

The Impact of Healthy Marriage Programs on Low-Income Couples and Families: Program Perspectives from Across the United States



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Real Strengths

Process

- **Informed Grantees of the OFA's intent**
- **Conducted Webinar to discuss OFA's plans**
- **Developed list of program data elements**
- **Culled existing Grantee records**
- **Requested grantee input into program data elements**
- **Requested existing participant-level data elements**

Methodology

Program Data Element Categories

- Demographic Information
- Curriculum
- Incentives and Recruitment
- Program Details
- Session Format
- Staff Information
- Facilitator Information
- Participant “Snapshots”

These data were analyzed to provide an overall picture of the demonstration programs and the participants being served.

Methodology

Participant-level Data Challenges

- Demonstration program not funded for rigorous evaluation.
- Of 21 grantees, 18 submitted summary data, but only 7 provided individual response level pre and post data in order to analyze change over time.
- No consistent data collection instruments across programs.

Methodology

Participant-level Data Constructs*

- Attitude toward Marriage
- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Budget/Finance Skills
- Abuse Prevention
- Relationship with Co-Parent
- Relationship with Significant Others

Data were analyzed using Wilcoxon signed rank sum test as the non-parametric version of a paired samples t-test.

*Constructs developed through the grantee performance measurement process (PART data)

Participant-Level Data Elements

Effectiveness of Healthy Marriage Curricula on Selected Participant Outcomes

Outcome	UNC Chapel Hill	Cuyahoga County	The Research Foundation of SUNY	Child and Family Resource Council	Catholic Charities of Orange County	Trinity Health Michigan	Parents Plus
Attitudes Towards Marriage	-	↑↑	-	↑	N/A	N/A	N/A
Communication Skills	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑	N/A
Conflict Resolution Skills	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	N/A	↑↑
Abuse Prevention Skills	-	↑↑	↑↑	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Budgeting/ Financial Skills	-	↑↑	N/A	↑↑	N/A	N/A	↑↑
Relationship Improvement (Co-Parent)	N/A	↑↑	N/A	↑	↑↑	N/A	↑
Relationship Improvement (Significant Other)	-	↑↑	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-

KEY:

- ↓ -- Perceived Negative Changes
- -- No Perceived Changes/Neutral
- ↑ -- Positive Changes Perceived
- ↑↑ -- Strong Positive Changes Perceived, with Evidence of Impact
- N/A – Grantee did not have questions corresponding to this category

Participant-level Data Elements (con't)

Findings

- Strong positive changes especially in areas of communication skills and conflict resolution skills
- Significant improvement in abuse prevention skills, budgeting/financial skills, relationship improvement with co-parent, and relationship improvement with significant other.
- Two grantees showed positive change in attitudes toward marriage.

Recommendations/Considerations

- Include relationship skill building in recruitment efforts, rather than simply focusing on parenting aspect of program.
- Create programs with shorter more intense dosage – this appears to positively impact completion and retention rates.
- Provide *coordinated* case management services/referrals.
- Include data collection/evaluation in your program design.

The Experiences of Federal Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Grantees

How/Where are Federally Funded Fatherhood Services being Delivered

- Community Based Responsible Fatherhood Programs
- Head Start/School Based Responsible Fatherhood Programs
- Hospital Based Responsible Fatherhood Programs
- Prison Based Responsible Fatherhood Programs
- Prisoner Re-entry into the Community Responsible Fatherhood Programs

How/Where are OFA Funded Healthy Marriage Services being Delivered

- Community-Based Healthy Marriage Programs
- Healthy Marriage Programs conducted in Faith-Based settings
- Healthy Relationship Education conducted with Grade School aged Youth.
- Head Start based Healthy Marriage Programs.
- Healthy Marriage/Healthy Relationship Programs conducted with College/University students.
- Hospital Based Healthy Marriage Programs for new parents.

Common challenges experienced by both OFA Fatherhood & Healthy Marriage Grantees

- Start-up
- Staff/Volunteer Selection, Management & Retention
- Operating government funded program aimed at assisting Fathers
- Establishing Trust with Fathers, Families, and Community
- Forming and Maintaining Agency Partnerships
- Recruitment/Retention of Participants
- Selection and delivery of Culturally Appropriate Curricula

What Worked for Federal Grantees

- To expedite start-up, seek/develop partnerships with trusted community organizations.
- Program and approach must be Culturally appropriate for fathers. Engage members from the target population in selection of curricula and program design.
- Location, Location, Location!
- Employ a variety of teaching methods designed to engage participants and respond to different adult learning styles.

What Worked for Federal Grantees

- Educational Credentials is **ONLY** part of the criteria for hiring staff.
- .Utilize a healthy mix of Traditional and Social Media to reach target population, attract and increase community awareness.
- Program staff **MUST** be trained in curricula and should participate in conferences and trainings that will develop staff expertise and strengthen program operations.

Key Community Partners

- Healthy Marriage ↔ Responsible Fatherhood Programs
- Educational/Head Start Agencies
- Domestic Violence Programs/Agencies
- Substance Abuse Prevention Programs/Agencies
- Healthcare Providers

Key Community Partners

- Business Community
- Employers and Employment Services (e.g. One-Stop Centers)
- Legal Aide
- Federal and State Government, including:
 - Child Support
 - Child Welfare
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Labor

Next Steps/Key Considerations

- Local partnerships should mirror the needs of the fathers/couples that your program is serving.
- Public/private partnerships is optimal in effort to best meet the needs of the community.
- Partnerships between Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs best ensures that the needs of fathers, their families, and their children are addressed.

Next Steps/Key Considerations

- Participant input is critical during planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. This ensures that the program is meeting the needs of the target population.
- Working partnerships with Domestic Violence agencies are key to holistic service delivery
- Include relationship skill building in recruitment efforts, rather than simply focusing on parenting aspect of program.

Next Steps/Key Considerations

- Create programs with shorter more intense dosage – this appears to positively impact completion and retention rates.
- Provide *coordinated* case management services/referrals.
- Include data collection/evaluation in your program design.

Recommendations from Fathers

- Distinct opportunities for in-prison and reentry programming—hospitable learning setting
- Importance of staff/volunteer selection – “can’t manufacture people that care”
- Benefit of group vs. 1:1 with program staff
- Value of programming that includes wives or significant others
- Importance of community connections: “8 hours isn’t enough...”
- Start these program earlier . . . for boys and girls

National Responsible Fatherhood Resources

- www.fatherhood.gov - National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (Federally Funded)
- www.allprodad.com – All Pro Dad
- www.cfuf – Center for Fathers and Urban Families (CFUF)
- www.fatherhood.first.org – Fatherhood First
- www.azffc.org – Fathers and Families Coalition of America, Inc.
- www.fathers.com – National Center for Fathering
- www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu – National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF)
- www.fatherhood.org – National Fatherhood Initiative
- www.nflgonline.org – National Fatherhood Leaders Group
- www.nlffi.org – National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute
- www.ncplstrongfamilies.com – National Partnership for Community Leadership
- www.strongfathers.com – Strong Fathers – Strong Families

Healthy Marriage Resources

- www.healthymarriageinfo.org – National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (NHMRC)
- www.TwoOfUs.org – Public Website for couples information.
- www.smartmarriages.com – National Clearinghouse on Marriage
- www.themarriageproject.com – National Marriage Research Resource at Rutgers University
- www.narme.com – National Association of Relationship and Marriage Education Professionals
- www.nermen.org – National Extension Relationship Marriage Education Network

Domestic Violence Resources

- The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - <http://www.ncadv.org>
- Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence
 - <http://www.caepv.org>
- Family Violence Prevention Fund
 - <http://endabuse.org>

For Teens:

- National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline
 - <http://www.loveisrespect.org>
- That's Not Cool
 - <http://www.thatstnotcool.com>

Questions?



Contact Information

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

877-4DAD411 (877-432-3411)

info@fatherhood.gov

National Healthy Marriage Resource Center

866-91-NHMRC (866-916-4672)

info@healthymarriageinfo.org